

IN MEMORIAM.

It is impossible to forget, as each of the numerous activities of the P.N.E.U. remind us of our membership, that our whole society is in mourning. The loss of Mr. Rooper, which will be felt in every part of our work, is one which all ex-students must especially feel. Our acquaintanceship with him generally began with what might have been a most unpleasant ordeal, but which his unfailing tact and kindly courtesy generally turned into a pleasant recollection. We are sometimes apt to feel that however proud we ourselves may be of our calling, the world as a whole rather looks down upon us for following it, and it is an encouragement to those weaker brethren who cannot ignore the world's standard that such a man and such a scholar should have been ready to rank himself as one with us.

A proposal has been made that some memorial should be raised to the memory of one who did such good work for the future efficiency of the world. Of this memorial our treasurer will have sent you full particulars.

Miss Mason's memorial notice in the "Parents' Review," and the few words on the same subject at the June Conversazione, expressed far better than we can do the effect that one good life can have upon many, and how potent such an example can be.

"Let us now praise famous men,
Men of little showing,
For their work continueth,
Broad and deep continueth,
Greater than their knowing."

PAPER READ AT A MEETING HELD IN CROYDON.

[By D. NESBITT.]

Those of us who have known and loved Miss Mason, and who have felt the power of her direct personal influence, realise how difficult a task it is to attempt to show, however inadequately, in what her principles consist, and what her work has done for the cause of Education.

"Is there anything new in Miss Mason's ideas," we are sometimes asked; or again, perhaps, the question is put in a contrary spirit: "Does Miss Mason then disapprove of all systems of Education except that of the P.N.E.U.?" or, "Is she a follower of Froebel, or Spencer; or does she advocate a return to old methods, and decry the "*modern*" side of every school?"

None of these questions can be answered with a monosyllable. All that can be said is that Miss Mason is antagonistic to no one, that her sympathy and interest is keenly with all good work done for the children's sake, and that she believes in and hopes the best of everybody.

Miss Mason has, therefore, founded the P.N.E.U., hoping that it would afford an opportunity for all, however different their schools of thought and however varied their experiences, to meet on the one common ground—their common interest in the children and their common desire to do everything for the children's sake.

Personally we students feel, and feel very deeply, that contact with Miss Mason's own thought is the greatest benefit to be obtained, and that the possibility of getting into touch

with her makes any Union or Society worth while for that alone. But Miss Mason herself does not feel this, and that is why representatives of very different ideas, and even of conflicting ideas, meet together at the London Conference and write in the "Parents' Review."

A few weeks ago the old students met at a Conference got up on their own initiative. We met at Scale How, and were able to see something of Miss Mason and to hear some very helpful words from her lips. But what encouraged us even more than her sympathetic speech was her sympathetic listening. She was so glad to hear about our work and so willing to understand our difficulties. Many had to say that there were points on which they had been obliged to deviate from the programme of work set, and Miss Mason was quite willing to see that one must adapt oneself to circumstances, that although the spirit of a principle should always be kept in mind, yet the letter must give way if programmes and rules are to be made for the children, and not the children for programmes and rules.

For Miss Mason is bound to no particular system. She is herself, and would like all members of the P.N.E.U. to be, essentially practical. She advocates a method of Education as opposed to a system. Her own words, quoted from "Home Education," explain the difference between the two.

"Method implies two things—a way to an end, and step-by-step progress in that way. Further, the following of a method implies an idea, a mental image, of the end or object to be arrived at. What do you propose that education shall effect in and for your child. . . . There is always a danger that a method, a *bonâ fide* method, should degenerate into a mere system. The Kindergarten Method, for instance, deserves the name, as having been conceived and perfected by large-hearted educators to aid the many-sided evolution of the living, growing, most complex human being; but what a miserable wooden system does it become in the hands of ignorant practitioners!"

"A system of education" is an alluring fancy; more so, on some counts, than a method, because it is pledged to more definite calculable results. By means of a certain system certain developments may be brought about through the observance of given rules. Shorthand, dancing, how to

pass examinations, how to become a good accountant, or a woman of society, may all be learned upon systems.

System—the observing of rules until the habit of doing certain things, of behaving in certain ways, is confirmed—is so successful in achieving precise results that it is no wonder there should be endless attempts to straiten the whole field of education to the limits of a system.

If a human being were a machine, education could do no more for him than to set him in action in prescribed ways, and the work of the educator would be simply to adopt a good working system or set of systems.

Though system is highly useful as an instrument of education, yet "a system of education is mischievous, as producing only mechanical action instead of the vital growth and movement of a living being."

At Ambleside, during the two years of our training, weekly criticism lessons were given by the students to the children of the Practising School. After the children had left the room each lesson was criticised, first by the other students and finally by Miss Mason. We were all anxious to find a system by which we could prepare our lessons, but it was a long time before we saw that all Miss Mason required of us was that we should be in touch with the children, that we should never forget our pupils through our interest in ourselves and our teaching, or less reprehensibly through interest in our subject.

Sometimes a lesson was approved in which the teacher talked to the pupils nearly all the time, provided that she did not talk over their heads and did not let their attention flag, and provided also that she not only had living ideas on her subject herself, but allowed the children opportunity to think for themselves and not merely take what was given to them.

More often, however, such a lesson was considered too much like a lecture for young children, as we were taught to aim more particularly at drawing out and making use of what is already in the child, rather than at simply storing its mind with new facts.

Sometimes, again, lessons were approved which were helped by means of apparatus, maps, plans, charts, &c.; and

at another time one would be approved where the teacher relied chiefly on interesting the children through some good book, and where she allowed them to enjoy it with little interference or comment from her.

Sometimes, during our first year, we felt that we would have liked some system upon which we could rely, but gradually, as we heard more of Miss Mason's criticisms, we began to understand the principles which underlie them.

Of the lessons which had been pronounced in a greater or lesser degree "failures," there were a few during which the teacher had failed throughout to interest her pupils, where the latter had been listless and evinced no pleasure in their work. But such lessons were few. The students were usually ardent themselves, and the children were generally "wanting to know," and ready to learn. Some of the "failures" were lessons that had been carefully prepared, and where the teacher was most enthusiastic over her subject, and such lessons were failures *in discipline*. I do not mean that the children were ever naughty at their lessons, but simply that no determined and definite effort had been required from or made by them. They had listened, they had been pleased, they had been interested, but—there it ended. The children had been told what they might, with a little trouble, have discovered for themselves. There had been no bracing, stimulating, striving, no struggle and no victory.

The little phrase "The children will be good if they are happy," has been aptly changed by Miss Mason into "They will be happy if they are good." We want the children to be happy, but through and not in spite of their work and their duties. In one sense, too, we want to give them their heart's desire, but we want to teach them that they cannot eat their cake and have it too, that is, they cannot follow their own love of knowledge and beauty and all the better things which children *do* love, and follow at the same time the caprice of the moment, the sudden wish to "show off" by some silliness before the others, the indolent desire to be what boys call "slack" for a morning or so, &c. No teacher need therefore have fears on the question of discipline because the children love their lessons, because they find history a pleasure, or because they enjoy doing sums. But

there is good reason to think that something is wrong when a child after taking up a subject with interest drops it because "It is so much trouble," or because "I shan't be punished if I don't do it," or "There are no marks given for it."

These then were two common points about the successful lessons:—

(1) They aroused sufficient interest to get the children's wills on the teacher's side, ready to take pleasure in their work.

(2) They required some effort of will from them, so that they learned to *make* themselves carry out their own best desires.

In no other respects were the lessons alike. There was no rule as to when help should be given, and when an attitude of expectant attention was all that was necessary on the part of the teacher.

Miss Mason did not discourage us: she was strict—that is, she noticed every detail—but she was not severe. She did not merely show us what we ought not to have done, but what we might do next time. She has herself this power of tact with children, the power of knowing when they need patience and gentleness, and when they need a brisk, bright, stimulating manner, of knowing, too, what difficulties they may fairly be expected to overcome, and when the teacher should leave them alone, and also when, on the other hand, the difficulties are so great that they are discouraging, when ideas are beyond eager little minds, or the mechanical labour too hard for little fingers.

Sometimes students and ex-students feel how much they fail in this tact; but if I may touch on so personal a topic, may I ask you that if you ever hear that a student has failed either once or many times in keeping her class in working order, in interesting her pupils, in giving them habits of discipline and method and quickness, you will remember that all the faults are not due to anything she has learned at the House of Education, but to her having failed partially or totally to carry out the right and true principles learned there.

Nothing could be more bitter than to feel that our failures

in some instances are attributed to our principles instead of to our practice. When we fail, believe me, it is through falling short of those principles, not through aiming at them.

But students have some great advantages in the helps Miss Mason offers through the Parents' Review School. Many who are not students, but who are teaching in their own homes, or as governesses in private families, have proved the value and helpfulness of the P.R.S. programmes and books.

[Here I will speak of the P.R.S. programmes—classes, &c.—if everything has not been said already.]

As an example of the way in which we may carry out the principle of Miss Mason's programmes and schemes of work, I may refer to the Time Table. Frequent changes of lessons are recommended, and we hear of home schoolrooms where the plan of giving short lessons of ten to twenty minutes for little children, and of half to three-quarters of an hour for older children, has proved a great success. In a school such frequent changes are not always possible, but an individual teacher may remember the principle, and change from oral work to written work or *vice versa* if she sees that the attention of the children is inclined to flag. Here, again, an experienced teacher or a teacher of rare genius may do right without the help of outside suggestion, but the average, and often not very experienced governess finds them an immense help.

The books recommended are also very helpful, and Miss Mason makes a great point of the help of good books. I can speak from experience when I say that I have always found children who have been for any length of time in the P.R.S., have a taste for reading good books, and that they look upon their lesson books as objects of interest and delight.

The sort of interest that is aroused by a good book, or a good lesson on History, Geography, or Natural Science, cannot be expected when the subject is such a one as French Irregular Verbs, Latin Declensions, or the Multiplication Tables. In such lessons Miss Mason suggests a *proper* use of the spirit of emulation, so that the lesson may go briskly, like an exciting game or race.

I must again quote a few words from Miss Mason's book, "Home Education," on the right and proper use of emulation. "Even with regular lessons and short lessons, a further stimulus is necessary to secure the attention of the child. His desire of approbation asks the stimulus, not only of a word of praise, but of something in the shape of a reward to secure his utmost efforts. Now rewards should be dealt out to the child upon principle: they should be the natural consequences of his good conduct. What is the natural consequence of work well and quickly done? Is it not the enjoyment of ampler leisure? The boy is expected to do two right sums in twenty minutes: he does them in ten minutes; the remaining ten minutes are his own, fairly earned, in which he should be free for a scamper in the garden, or any delight he chooses. His writing task is to produce six perfect *m*'s: he writes six lines with only one good *m* in each line; the time for the writing lesson is over and he has none for himself; or, he is able to point out six good *m*'s in his first line, and he has the rest of the time to draw steamboats and railway trains. This possibility of letting the children occupy themselves variously in the few minutes they may gain at the end of each lesson is, perhaps, the chief compensation which the home schoolroom offers for the zest which the sympathy of numbers and emulation give to school work."

Knowing Miss Mason's objection to marks in the home schoolroom, I asked whether she would consider them equally objectionable in a school where the system of reward by natural consequences could not well be carried out. She replied that as a *record* she quite approved of marks, and to help the child towards accuracy and perfect execution in such subjects as arithmetic and spelling where perfect execution is possible.

To quote again on this subject: "The children are being trained to live in the world, and in the world we all *do* get good marks of one kind or another—prize, or praise, or both, according as we excel others, whether in football or tennis, or in picture-painting or poem making. If the child is to go out into an emulous world, why, it may be well that he should be brought up in an emulous school. But the mother must teach her child to be first without vanity, and to be last

without bitterness." This indeed is quite possible, indeed I would say natural to the dispositions of most children.

Of the many advantages of the P.R.S. other than those of books and programmes I have no time to speak. The children like to feel when working in twos or threes at home that other children are doing the same work and are interested at the same time in the same books as they. The Nature work and handicrafts are a great interest to children, and their successes in the latter are a delight to them, while their failures teach them to respect hand-work and hand-workers. The examinations at the end of each term are a great help to the teacher; but it must be remembered that the system of marking is not that adopted by most public examining bodies. Full marks for a paper means that the work is satisfactory considering the age and progress of the child, *not* that the paper is better than any other sent in, and *not* that it is perfect in itself.

MARY, MARY, SO CONTRARY.

CHARACTERS.

SIR ANTONY ROWLEY, *a Frog*.

TOMMY GREEN.

A BRIGAND.

MISTRESS MARY.

NURSE.

SCENE—*A Garden. Six children in long green dresses, with large yellow sunflower petals all round their faces, in a row across back of stage.*

1st S. Flower. How tired I am of being watered. I am wet to the pith three times a day because our sweet Mistress says I am not tall enough.

2nd S. Flower. Your fate is not so unkind as mine. How

would you like to be tied up here without being able to move or wave in the sweet summer breeze, and all because "I stoop!"

3rd S. Flower. Ah! mine is the hardest fate; it is the end of everything. I am to be cut down. Yes, you may well start. Cut down, right off my stalk; and then I shall die like a limp straw.

Mistress Mary pronounced my death sentence this morning as she pointed me out to Tommy Green. "That one is going to seed," she said, "you can cut it down." Ah, what hurts me most is to think I look as if I were going to seed.

1st S. Flower. Tommy Green is a cruel boy, *he* would not mind the job; he once drowned a harmless helpless cat in a well.

Mistress Mary, true to her character, took him on here as gardener because she *loves* cats.

3rd S. Flower. I shall have no Tommy Stout to save me, as the cat had.

2nd S. Flower. Alas! Alas! would that we had never been planted.

Enter TOMMY GREEN singing.

Froggy would a-wooing go
Whether conscience let him or no,
But Froggie's end was full of woe
Because his *Mummie* got to know!

S. Flowers (altogether). Who was his Mother?

Tommy. Eh! What! Oh those talkative sunflowers again. That reminds me I've got to cut down that lanky one.

3rd S. Flower. Oh, stop just one minute; *do* tell us first about Froggy, there's a dear.

Tommy. Oh, that's an excuse to live and look like a poplar tree a little longer. Who ever saw a respectable sunflower such a size?

1st S. Flower (coaxingly). Oh, but really we do want to know about Froggy; what's his *real* name?

Tommy. Why, Sir Antony Rowley, of course; and he comes here courting Mistress Mary! Fancy that, Mistress Mary! Ha, ha, ha!

2nd S. Flower. You are a very rude boy; why shouldn't he come courting her? She is our Mistress in spite of all her little ways, and I'll not have her laughed at.